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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: MEDIA REACTION ON PRESIDENT OBAMA'S CAIRO
SPEECH

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1. SUMMARY: President Obama's Cairo speech has received overwhelmingly positive press coverage in Kazakhstan. Official "Khabar TV" broadcast President Nazarbayev's welcoming comments about the speech, and daily "Liter" published an in-depth, analytical story on the address. The overall coverage has been light, due mainly to timing: the speech was delivered late Thursday afternoon, which missed the deadlines for the Thursday-Friday weekly analytical newspapers. However, several Internet news sites reported positively on the speech. END SUMMARY.

PRESIDENTIAL IMPRIMATUR

2. Several media outlets, including the government-owned flagship station "Khabar TV," reported President Nazarbayev's reaction to the Cairo speech. Nazarbayev said he was "inspired by this constructive approach from the U.S. President, and for its part, Kazakhstan is ready to keep strengthening the political, cultural, and economic cooperation between the two countries. There is a vast difference between leaders of states who rely on fear and violence and thoughtful leaders who are ready to contribute to building a safe, free, and prosperous world. In his speech, Barack Obama made it clear that he understands this difference very well, and I enthusiastically accept his appeal to work together." In a private meeting, Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin told Ambassador Hoagland that it was "one of the best speeches ever and deserves to be published in 'Speeches that Changed the World.'" Adding that he thought the candor and intelligence of the speech were unparalleled, Tazhin said he sincerely hoped President Obama would be successful in his new opening to the Muslim world-"not for the sake of the United States, but for the sake of the whole world."

DENYING THE DENIERS

3. Pro-government, Russian-language "Liter" published the most serious analysis of the speech that has appeared so far. The author said that the U.S. President admitted that there was "an abyss of

misunderstanding" between the Islamic world and Western countries. Before Obama's visit to Egypt, the author noted, the White House made it clear that one of the aims of the visit was to present a new image of the United States to the Islamic world. But Obama also unexpectedly stated, "It is my task to change the negative stereotypes of Islam that have resulted from the fight against terrorism." The author said that "Obama's attention to the problem of Holocaust denial was another surprise" and pointed out that "this was a hint for Iran and its wordy politicians." Though this point might have been "a sweet treat for Israel," the author thinks that "one of the requirements for renewing the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Iran will be Iran's acceptance of the Holocaust."

14. "As promised," continued the author, "the United States has abandoned the idea of reforming the world according to its own standards. Now the United States is aiming at renewing historic justice." Calling Obama's Middle East policy "equidistant," the author said that the United States "will not turn its back on Palestinians who deserve to have a decent life on their own territory." The author concluded that nothing new was said about Iran's nuclear program. "Apparently the White House is waiting for the results of the political battle in Iran, which will either weaken the fist or make it stronger."

"SECRET MUSLIM"

15. Pro-government, Kazakh-language "Aikyn" wrote, "The Muslim community all over the world is supportive of and thankful for Obama's address." The author opined that American analysts were wondering "why Obama has such a warm heart for Muslims." He speculated that some of them connect this with Obama's father being Muslim, while the President's mother is believed to be Catholic and he says he is Christian, "analysts do not exclude the possibility that the U.S. President might be a secret Muslim."

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BLOG ALERT

16. Independent Internet outlet "Geokz.tv" published a statement by the Union of Muslims of Kazakhstan, a small association independent of the official Islamic hierarchy, that said that Obama's speech "resonated widely throughout the world" and would help develop relations between the United States and the Muslim community. "We want to believe that there was more sincere emotion than political pragmatism in the speech. The American leader's speech gives hope." While acknowledging that perhaps Obama would encounter "insuperable obstacles" on this path, "nevertheless his audacious attempt to destroy obsolete stereotypes deserves our sympathy and respect."

17. The web site of the opposition, Russian-language "Respublika" newspaper, noted that it was "very symbolic" that Obama didn't visit Israel during his trip to the Middle East. In his Cairo speech, he promised to help Palestinians "like no other American president had done before." At the same time, Obama stressed that Israel had an "irrevocable right" to exist. "Political observers question whether it is possible for Obama to have it both ways." The author concluded by pointing out that "the U.S. President is being subjected to severe (domestic) criticism" and saying that he might have decided to make this trip "to avoid growing discontent at home."

HOAGLAND